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## **Competitive Preference Priority 5 Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes**

### **(a) Improving young children's school readiness so that children are prepared for success**

The Boys & Girls Club of Greater Milwaukee (B&GCGM) in partnership with Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) will implement the *Milwaukee Community Literacy Project (MCLP)*, an innovative program designed to improve the early learning outcomes of high need students by enhancing the quality of kindergarten through third grade (K5-3<sup>rd</sup>) education in seven MPS schools. The project will help develop students' social, emotional, and cognitive readiness through support in three spheres, school, community and family. During the school sphere, students will be provided an intensive reading intervention through a one-on-one tutoring relationship that supports students' emotional readiness. Support will continue in the community sphere after school where students will be provided a safe, nurturing experience through project based learning which builds social interactions and cognitive skills. The family sphere will work with the parents by providing them the tools needed to support their child's education.

### **(b) Improving developmental milestones and standards and aligning them with outcomes**

As part of the district's corrective action, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction is requiring MPS to provide ongoing assessment of student progress that includes a universal screener in reading. The early literacy universal screening assessment will measure both pre-literacy and early literacy concepts such as listening, phonemic awareness, phonics, word reading, and reading comprehension. An established cut score will be used to determine which students are at risk for future academic failure. The *MCLP* three spheres of intervention will help at risk students meet developmental milestones. The intervention will be aligned to MPS corrective action plan which includes:

- Implementing a K-12 comprehensive literacy plan
- Providing a framework for instruction using curriculum guides for all district selected curricula that document the direct connections to state standards, descriptors and district learning targets
- Providing professional development on differentiation in literacy and mathematics

**(c) Improving alignment, collaboration, and transitions between early learning programs**

The *MCLP* will improve alignment, collaboration, and transitions between early learning programs by providing students K5-3<sup>rd</sup> grade with safety nets in three spheres that occur during school, after school and in the home. This response to intervention will wrap services around the students so they receive the intensive support they need. The *MCLP* will use the district's Comprehensive Literacy Plan which delineates alignment between grade levels specific to reading and writing.

***A. Need for the Project and Quality of the Project Design***

**(1) The extent to which the project represents an exceptional approach to the priorities**

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee in conjunction with Milwaukee Public Schools, official partners, will implement the *Community Literacy Project (MCLP)* which is built on a limited scale project called Spheres of Proud Achievement in Reading for Kids (SPARK) that has shown promising results in 8 schools. Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) is a large urban district with a reported enrollment for 2009-10 of 82,444 and a racial profile of 88.1% non-white (Appendix H). As a district, 81% of all MPS students live in poverty as evidenced by the percent of students who qualify for free/reduced lunch. Low family socioeconomic status can limit the experiences, resources, health care, and the quality of available child care. Nontraditional family structures -- such as foster care, single-parent families--also have an impact on children's early experiences.

The *MCLP* will tackle the challenge of getting all students on grade level in reading by grade 3. A student that is not reading on grade level by grade 3 has less chance of graduating from high school. Law enforcement is beginning to realize that 78% of juvenile crime is committed by high school dropouts. But these dropouts can be predicted with 70% accuracy by third grade, based on reading ability, and prior retention (The Children's Reading Foundation<sup>1</sup>; National Research Council, 1998<sup>2</sup>; Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985<sup>3</sup>; Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1996<sup>4</sup>). The *MCLP* will show how to meet the challenge, succeed and provide details for replication in other districts.

The need for increased literacy opportunities in the Milwaukee area is urgent. Fourth grade tests results show a need for improvement in K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading achievement (Appendix H ). According to the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) administered in November each year, only 59.8% of fourth graders enrolled in MPS were proficient in reading (November 2009 results). MPS has not made adequately yearly progress for five consecutive years in reading and mathematics at the elementary, middle, and high school grade spans and is categorized as a District Identified for Improvement level 4. There are large achievement gaps in reading that need to be addressed:

1. Only 59.8% of fourth grade students in MPS were proficient or advanced in reading on the WKCE compared to their peers statewide at 81.4% proficient or advanced, a 21.6 percentage point gap.
2. At the fourth grade 52.7% of African American and 60.7% of Hispanic students scored proficient or advanced in reading on the WKCE compared to 83% of their white peers.
3. There is a 25.4 percentage point gap between economically disadvantaged students scoring proficient in reading (55.7%) compared to their more affluent peers (81.1%).

In response to MPS reading results, which have remained stagnant for years, B&GCGM initiated a pilot program entitled SPARK Early Literacy Program in 2005 at the Fitzsimonds Boys & Girls Club in partnership with Ralph Metcalfe School with the goal to transform struggling readers in kindergarten through second grade into proficient readers. By the 2009-10 school year the SPARK program served 450 struggling readers in kindergarten through third grade at eight B&GCGM school/club partnerships. Through the Investing in Innovation program the *MCLP* will further develop the work of SPARK by creating an integrated school, community, and family initiative to substantially improve literacy performance, at the same time adding to the research base through an experimental design evaluation, and documenting steps for replication especially in persistently low performing schools.

The *MCLP* will provide a model for turning around low performing schools in corrective action (absolute priority 4). All of the participating sites perform lower than the district in fourth

grade reading and two of the participating schools are Tier III schools identified for improvement in reading. Funding will allow programming to be continued and enhanced at 5 sites and to expand implementation at two new sites. The following schools are targeted for services based on their need for improvement in reading: Clarke Street, Eighty-First Street, Lloyd Street, Metcalfe, Rogers Street, Sherman, Townsend (Appendix H demographic and achievement data).

**(2) The extent to which the project has clearly specified and measurable goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved and linked to the priorities the applicant is seeking to meet.**

The *MCLP* is an innovative program for improving early learning outcomes of students in kindergarten – 3<sup>rd</sup> grades (competitive preference priority 5). By improving the literacy levels of non-proficient readers the project will turn around low performing Tier III elementary schools in MPS a district in corrective action (absolute priority 4). In the summer of 2009 the Boys & Girls Clubs and MPS began planning for an in-depth evaluation that the partners hope will warrant expansion of the program throughout the school district. The culmination of nearly one year of planning can be seen in the following goal and objectives as well as the program concept map logic model attached as Appendix H. The project will reach these goals and objectives as documented through the performance measures by expanding the implementation of and investment in community literacy.

**Goal:** Demonstrate an impact on improving student growth in reading for high-need students by expanding the implementation of and investment in community literacy

**Objective:** Significantly improve reading performance of participants through literacy work in 3 spheres

**Performance Measure 1:** Teacher ratings of participating students will exhibit higher reading levels than the students in the control group

**Performance Measure 2:** Students will demonstrate a greater growth than control group participants on the district's universal screening assessment in reading

**Performance Measure 3:** Participating students will be reading at grade level as determined by the fourth grade state standardized assessment, WKCE

**Performance Measure 4:** The percent of students proficient and advanced at the participating schools will be greater than the district average on the reading subtest of the fourth grade WKCE, the state standardized assessment

The project will provide a “wrap-around” approach to early literacy instruction with school – community - family partnerships that create an environment conducive to collaboration. The three spheres of wrap-around support are described below.

The *School Sphere*: Each child in kindergarten through grade 3 will participate in an early literacy benchmark assessment in the fall. The benchmark assessment is a standardized assessment that will be administered three times per year and will serve as the district’s universal screening measure to identify children in need of intervention. The assessment will serve as the tool for identification of students targeted for the *MCLP*. Since the assessment is administered multiple times throughout the year it will also be used to inform instruction; to measure students’ responses to school-based interventions; and to provide information to monitor and evaluate program performance.

There will be 50 students identified for treatment each year in each participating school. Identified students will receive individual tutoring sessions three times each week outside of the school’s mandatory reading block time thereby providing an additional literacy intervention for struggling students during the day school. About eight tutors will be provided at each site. A certified teacher will serve as a site coordinator at each school and will oversee the tutoring, provide tutor training, model lessons and provide tutor support as needed. Tutors and site coordinators will be trained by a University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee professor and the project director. Project staff will also receive training from MPS staff on the comprehensive literacy plan. Each tutoring session will be arranged around a lesson plan that includes the following six activities:

- 1a. *Familiar Activity/ Word Play* (5 minutes) – The lesson begins with a warm-up where the student and tutor review a concept that is familiar to the student.

- 1b. *Running Record* (replaces 1a. every 6 sessions for ~5 minutes) – In the running record exercise the student reads a passage to the instructor who notes the miscues the student makes. The record is then scored to determine student progress.
2. *Vocabulary Instruction* (5 minutes) - Vocabulary development is highly correlated to successful reading comprehension (Pressley, 2000<sup>5</sup>; Stanovich, 1986<sup>6</sup>). Explicit and direct vocabulary instruction will allow students to see and use words multiple times in multiple contexts.
3. *Writing* (~9 minutes) – Writing exercises are used to further develop students’ language skills and enrich their vocabularies.
4. *Guided Instruction* (10 minutes) – As students use RAZ-Kids, an on-line supplemental reading program, in the classroom, tutors will select books from Reading A to Z (the parent program for RAZ-Kids) and other sources which align to the current reading level of the student. These books will serve as the context for guided instruction which helps the students acquire reading strategies, such as the use of context clues, letter and sound knowledge, and syntax or word structure. Books from Reading A to Z can and will be duplicated for students to use at home.
5. *Tutor Read Aloud* (1 minute) – Each session ends with the tutors reading aloud a passage or poem to model fluency placing special emphasis on inflection, character voice and proper cadence.

The ***Community Sphere***: Students participating in tutoring during the school day will also participate in a one hour after-school literacy sessions 3 times per week provided by the site coordinator and tutors. The sessions will be conducted within each school’s after school Community Learning Center (CLC) providing an ideal infrastructure for implementation. After-school literacy sessions provide a less formal setting than in-school sessions and include:

1. Student interest surveys to select book and activities based on students’ interests
2. Group projects that involve comprehension and vocabulary of literature, exploration of ideas presented in literature, extension of literature, integration of the arts and writing, presentations
3. Literacy games and small group activities that increase phonemic awareness

4. A print-rich environment conducive to early literacy
5. Individual and small group read-alouds structured around themes
6. Independent reading time

The ***Family Sphere***: The family outreach component emphasizes keeping families engaged and involved in their children's reading progress. Project staff will engage the families of students in the treatment group and provide convenient opportunities for parental involvement. During family sphere outreach, consent and commitment to participation forms will be signed. Families unwilling to participate in all spheres will be replaced with a family from the random assignment list. Specific strategies for family involvement include:

1. A parent from the school will be hired to serve as a Family Literacy Partner who will be a liaison to the families. One volunteer parent from each grade level K5 – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade will work with the Family Literacy Partner in connecting with parents. The Family Literacy Partner will work with teachers, site coordinators, and tutors to ensure that parents receive information on their child's progress and how best to support their child's achievement.
2. Twice monthly contact with parents regarding student progress. Contact will be made in a variety of ways and with an emphasis on face-to-face.
3. A minimum of 2 home visits per participating family per year will take place to support the parent in how to help their child's literacy growth. More frequent visits will take place as needed for students that are lacking attendance in the school or community sphere or parents that request more support.
4. Parent/family literacy books, print materials and activities that actively engage parents and their child in literacy will be provided to families at family events, home visits or during other family contacts.
5. My Home Library Program will provide *MCLP* participants with books each month that they keep at home. Activity sheets are also sent home with students and they are encouraged to read the books and complete the activity sheets with their families.
6. Monthly family events, designed to engage families in improving student achievement, will be



developed collaboratively with a team of parents led by the Family Literacy Partner. Three times per year students will present projects developed during the community sphere.

***B. Strength of Research, Significance of Effect, and Magnitude of Effect***

**(1) The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that there are research-based findings or reasonable hypotheses that support the project**

The *School Sphere* of the *MCLP* will provide one-on-one tutoring during the school day, three days a week for 30 minutes each. One-on-one tutoring as a strategy to prevent early school failure for at risk students has been the subject of numerous scientifically based research evaluations, including quasi-experimental, correlational, and descriptive studies. Students with below-average reading skills who are tutored by volunteers show significant gains in reading skills when compared with similar students who do not receive tutoring from a quality tutoring program. Tutoring programs that showed the most positive gains had extensive training for tutors, formal time commitments by tutors, structured tutoring sessions, careful monitoring of tutoring services, and close relationships between classroom instruction and curriculum and the tutoring services provided (U.S. Department of Education<sup>7</sup>).

The framework of the school sphere of the *MCLP* is based on the Reading Recovery program. Reading Recovery focuses on in-school tutoring with lesson plans written and assessments analyzed by the tutors themselves. In a comparison of early literacy intervention programs, Pinnell et al found that Reading Recovery subjects performed significantly better than any other treatment and comparison group on all measures (Pinnell, Lyons, DeFord, Bryk, & Seltzer, 1994<sup>8</sup>). B&GCGM has seen similar results in their initial implementation of SPARK (see pre/post table on page 11).

A meta-analysis of intervention research revealed that well-trained paraprofessionals and adult volunteers in small-group settings can serve an important function in helping struggling learners to read, and can do so in a way that is more cost effective than one-on-one reading programs that require the instruction to be led by a certified teacher or specialist (Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes & Moody, 2000<sup>9</sup>). One-on-one tutoring during the school day will be provided by pre-service teachers and other tutors

who have earned at least a two year college equivalent. The tutors will also receive professional development from the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee and coaching by a certified teacher-site coordinator. Research by Brown et al. (2005<sup>10</sup>) and Ehri et al (2007<sup>11</sup>) compared certified tutors and paraprofessional tutors and found the certified tutors to be more effective (as cited in Slavin, Lake, Davis, & Madden, 2009<sup>12</sup>).

Several well known programs such as Reading Recovery, Success for All and lesser known models use a one-on-one tutoring model. Even though the programs vary widely in curriculum, tutoring methods, duration, integration with classroom instruction, and the use of certified versus paraprofessional tutors, all have shown to be effective in raising the achievement of at-risk students. Wasik and Slavin (1993<sup>13</sup>) reviewed the effectiveness of Reading Recovery and four other programs and concluded that one-on-one tutoring is a potentially effective means of preventing student failure. Although the programs varied in design and the components of reading that were emphasized, the effect sizes were substantially positive in nearly every case. Programs with the most comprehensive models seem to have larger impacts such as Reading Recovery with effect sizes of +.72 in pilot cohort and +.78 in the second cohort. Success for All which integrates completely with regular instruction also produced some of the largest effect sizes. Strategic tutoring in which the tutor guides the students is the most effective for improving academic achievement (Hock, Schumaker, & Deshler, 2001<sup>14</sup>).

The running record will be used every other week as a tool to assess and record what cueing systems students are currently using while reading. It also helps to determine the difficulty level of the text they are reading and assists teachers in accurately matching students to instructional level materials (Hubbard, 2009<sup>15</sup>). Tutors can record what immediately happened, what miscues the student made and the strategies the student used to correct them, if any (Clay, 1993<sup>16</sup>). The data is used to determine the students reading level, the reading strategies the tutor should focus on in the next lesson and the supports that are necessary to move the student along.

According to Fountas and Pinnell (2005<sup>17</sup>), supports can be administered during guided reading

to help students learn effective strategies for processing text with understanding and to meet the varying instructional needs. Since reading and writing are a complementary process, interactive writing and writing with the teacher directs children's attention to aspects of words and moves them forward in the development of the writing process towards independent writing (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001<sup>18</sup>). The school sphere and the community sphere will extend guided reading and writing exercises that develop a student's language skills and enrich their vocabularies.

The *Community Sphere* provides opportunities for students to explore reading books that are of interest to them through thematic group literature projects; literacy games and small group activities; small group read aloud and independent reading time. Research on motivation shows most students have a high self-concept about reading and when they read books of their own choosing they are likely to be more motivated, independent readers. According to Mohr (2006<sup>19</sup>) when given an opportunity to self-select majority of students chose books that served as windows to the world around them rather than texts with characters reflecting their gender, ethnicity, or cultural backgrounds. Students who were given a book as a reward and students who received no reward were more motivated to read than the students who received a token such as a sticker or pencil. Providing reading-related rewards such as books, more time for silent reading, and choosing books from the library sends the message that reading is valued (Marinak & Gambrel, 2008<sup>20</sup>). The ultimate goal is to encourage motivated, skilled readers who choose to read widely and who develop lifelong reading habits.

Research on the effects of parental involvement such as those in the *Family Sphere* has shown a consistent, positive relationship between parents' engagement in their children's education and student outcomes. Senechal's (2006<sup>21</sup>) meta-analysis of family reading activities showed that brief "skills" instruction after reading was six times more powerful than simply reading to the child. The combined results for the 14 intervention studies, representing 1174 families, were clear: parent involvement has a positive impact on children's reading acquisition. The mean effect size for the combined studies was moderately large (effect size = .68). This effect size corresponds to a 10-point gain on a literacy test

(with a standard deviation of 15) for the intervention children as compared to the control children.

Joyce L. Epstein, in a 1995 article and a 2001 book titled *School, Family, and Community Partnerships*, argued that school, family, and community are important "spheres of influence" on children's development and that a child's educational development is enhanced when these three environments work collaboratively toward shared goals. By implementing activities across six types of involvement: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaboration with the community, educators can help improve student achievement and experiences in school (State University<sup>22</sup>).

**(2) The extent to which the proposed project has been attempted previously with promising results that suggest that more formal and systematic study is warranted.**

**2008/2009 School Year – Program Results:**

The *MCLP* is based on the B&GCGM's SPARK Program which utilized the PALS Assessment (Phonological Awareness and Literacy Screening) – a rigorous, nationally recognized assessment tool that provides rich information for the tutors as a basis for their lesson planning. Children are given both a pre- and post-test to assess progress related to two primary objectives, *reading accuracy* and *comprehension*; and two secondary objectives, *spelling* and *reading words in isolation*. The pre/post test table below demonstrates the reading gains realized by SPARK participants.

**SPARK Program Results – A Demonstration of Accelerated Growth**

Reading Improvement Indicators	Pre-Test Fall 2008	Post-Test Spring 2009	Pre-to-Post Comparison
% of Children <u>Reading Accurately*</u> at Grade Level	23%	84%	<b>+263%</b>
% of Children <u>Comprehending Grade Level Reading Material</u>	19%	75%	<b>+295%</b>
% Grade Level <u>Words Spelled</u> Correctly	23%	47%	<b>+107%</b>

% of Grade Level Words Read Correctly in Isolation	28%	69%	+144%
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\*Accuracy is defined as 90% or more of words in a passage identified correctly

These results closely mirror gains demonstrated during the 2007/2008 SPARK year. This consistency in SPARK performance speaks to the reliability of the measures as well as the efficacy of the program design and implementation.

**(3) The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that the project will have a positive impact.**

Given the positive effect sizes provided in the first section of part B - *Strength of Research, Significance of Effect, and Magnitude of Effect* for one-on-one tutoring and parent involvement along with the research supporting the guided reading and independent reading time the program will have a positive impact on student success in reading. The research and the effect size findings of independent studies are further supported by the initial results of the SPARK program. At individual grade levels, the following was observed during the 2008/2009 school year:

- **Kindergarten:** The percentage of SPARK kindergarteners who could successfully name the letters of the alphabet improved from 35% to 86%, an increase of 144% from pre- to post-test. Additionally, the percentage of kindergarteners who correctly identified the sounds that the letters make grew from 20% to 71% an increase of 266%.
- **First Grade:** Seventy-nine percent of participants were reading at grade level according to the post-test and 69% comprehended what they read. This is significant because not one participant was able to accurately read or comprehend a grade level passage on the pre-test
- **Second Grade:** Participants in the second grade saw similar improvements, with 82% reading at grade level by the end of the school year compared to only 18% at the beginning of the year. This represents a 365% increase. SPARK second graders improved from 16% to 84% in reading comprehension; an increase of 420%.

- **Third Grade:** By the end of the program year, 91% of third graders were reading at grade level, compared to 52% at the beginning of year; a 76% increase. By the end of the school year SPARK third graders improved from 41% to 75% in reading comprehension; an 83% increase.

The use of ongoing, informal assessments (running records) enables tutors to match children with books that are at their instructional levels, increasing the likelihood of incremental student success. *MCLP* will build on the effective elements of the SPARK tutoring, after school time and parent involvement and fill the gaps to increase parent involvement and provide more research-based structure to the community sphere.

### ***C. Experience of the Eligible Applicant***

#### **(1) The past performance of the applicant in implementing projects of the size and scope.**

The mission of the B&GCGM is to inspire and empower all young people, especially those who need us most, to realize their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens. Founded in 1887, B&GCGM is the oldest and largest youth-serving organization in Milwaukee with more than 120 years of experience positively influencing the lives of thousands of young people from all walks of life. The Clubs currently serve more than 33,000 young people at 38 locations throughout greater Milwaukee. Boys & Girls Clubs program generate positive results in academic achievement, health and wellness and civic engagement. They also equip young people with the tools they need to become productive members of society.

With 30 sites throughout the district, B&GCGM is the largest contributor of 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CLC) programs within the network of MPS providers. The Clubs manages a CLC budget of \$3M in federal funds and contribute approximately \$1M in additional funds to the programs each year. CLCs provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. The program helps students meet state and local standards in core academic subjects such as reading and math; offers students a broad array of enrichment activities that can complement their regular academic programs;

and offers literacy and other educational services to the families of participating children. B&GCGM served 13,284 unduplicated participants in CLC programs in 2009. On average Clubs CLC sites serve 3,100 participants each day. CLC participants are offered opportunities to learn new skills which are built through programs in six core program areas: Character & Leadership Development; Education & Career Development; Health & Life Skills; Sports, Fitness, & Recreation; Environmental Education and The Arts.

In the 2010-11 school year, Milwaukee Public Schools will be overseeing a \$4 million grant from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction to operate fifty-six 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers throughout the district. Milwaukee Public Schools has received over 50 million in grant funding since 1998 to run CLCs.

**(2) The extent to which an applicant provides information and data demonstrating that — (b) The nonprofit organization has significantly improved student achievement, attainment, or retention through its record of work with an LEA or schools.**

As the lead community agency in 30 MPS Community Learning Centers B&GCGM delivers academic and youth development programming that has a profound impact on students. According to data collected and analyzed by the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee's Center for Urban Initiatives Research students who attend Clubs CLCs 10 times or more in a trimester are 21.3% more likely to read proficiently than their neighborhood peers, 59.7% more likely to be proficient in math than their neighborhood peers, 41.4% less likely to be suspended than their neighborhood peers and 37.1% less likely to be chronically truant than their neighborhood peers. Additionally, 84% of high school students who participate in B&GCGM signature teen programs graduate from high school on time compared to only 67% of their MPS peers.

***D. Quality of the Project Evaluation***

**(1) The extent to which the evaluation is appropriate to the size and scope of the project.**

The primary method for determining the effectiveness of *MCLP* will use a randomized-control-trial (RCT) selection framework that will allow us to isolate the impact of *MCLP* from the impact of endogenous family and school factors that would result in parents self-selecting their students into the program and/or teacher encouraging specific students to participate. The evaluation will also include a formative evaluation designed to ensure that fidelity of the program model is maintained and to document implementation and intermediate outcomes, so to allow program administration the ability to make course-corrections to the design and implementation to ensure students and families receive a consistent and adequate “dose” of the intervention.

The design will be best characterized as a repeated-measures cross-over study. The five-year period that *MCLP* will be in place will allow students to move back-and-forth between the participant and control groups. All eligible students who do not move to another school without the *MCLP* program will be guaranteed a program slot within two years. In the third year students remaining eligible for *MCLP* will again be randomly selected to again receive *MCLP*. Thus, once fully implemented, *MCLP* eligible participants will receive the program twice, once in either K or first and once in either second or third grade.

Figure 1 (included in appendix H, Evaluation Plan) includes a diagram of the selection process for years one and two of the program. First, all students in the district will take a district administered early childhood formative assessment. The initial selection of students from each school will be pulled from the 100 lowest scoring students in each school. From these, a stratified random selection of 50 students from each of seven schools will be selected to participate each year, with 50 remaining eligible students selected as controls. Additional students will be deemed eligible and randomly selected if more than two parent decline participation in the study. Except for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students, control students will be guaranteed the opportunity to participate in *MCLP* the following year. Third grade students who are selected as controls, will be guaranteed participation in another district literacy program in fourth grade.



One potential contaminate of the selection process is the existence of other programs in the school such as Supplemental Educational Services (SES) and other academic and enrichment programs funded by CLC funds. It is possible, if not likely, that being selected into *MCLP* would result in parents being less likely to enroll their students in SES and perhaps would affect the types of CLC programs they would engage their students in as well. If this were to occur, the participant and control groups would no longer be equivalent. Thus, to prevent this possibility, selection into *MCLP* will occur after selection into SES and CLC programs have been completed.

The primary measure used to test the effectiveness of the *MCLP* for all students will be the district-administered early childhood reading benchmark assessment. Additionally, the impact of *MCLP* will be assessed in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade participants with the reading component of the state third through tenth grade assessment, WKCE. The benchmark assessment will be administered in the Fall, Winter, and Spring and the WKCE is administered in the Fall. Student growth on the benchmark test will be assessed by charting student growth from the fall to the spring administrations. WKCE growth will be charted from fall to fall administrations. Both fixed-effects and random-effects multi-level modeling procedures will be used to assess the “value-add” of *MCLP*. The primary goal of these analyses will be isolate the unique value of *MCLP* on top of other regular-school-day and after-school literacy initiatives. In both methods we will cluster errors terms around the school and teacher so that the independence of observations assumption of regression analysis is not violated. Fixed-effect methods will allow us to use students as their own control by comparing student gains on the benchmark and WKCE in years that students participate in *MCLP* to years that they do not participate. In random-effects analysis, we will compare the achievement of participant and control students by controlling for prior achievement, demographic characteristics, and participation in any other non-*MCLP* programs.

Our power analysis, presented in Table 1 (included in appendix H, Evaluation Plan),

indicates that after one year, we will have adequate power to detect a moderately sized effect across grades and a large effect within a grade. During the course of the study, we will ultimately be able to pool power across years to achieve the ability to detect small effects of .1. To control for the possibility of a Type I error, we will use the Benjamini-Hochberg (BH) method (Benjamini & Hochberg, 1995<sup>29</sup>).

**(2) The extent to which the evaluation will provide high-quality implementation data and performance feedback, and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving outcomes.**

Because *MCLP* combines empirically-validated literacy strategies in a novel way, it will be critically important to document the implementation of the program and feed this information back into program administrators so that course-corrections can be made to the program, to determine the most successful implementation strategy. Multiple areas will be included in the formative assessments related to the appropriateness of staff selection and training, school-context factors related to the fidelity of implementation, and the adequacy of staff training in the implementation of the research protocol.

The primary tools of the formative assessment will include the on-line Aplus attendance tracking system, the assessments built into the A to Z on-line curriculum, notes and records maintained by parent liaisons, direct observations of program components, and a series of parent, teacher, *MCLP* instructor, and principal surveys.

**(3) The extent to which the evaluation will provide sufficient information about the key elements and approach of the project to facilitate further development, replication, or testing**

The information gathered through the formative evaluation process will be maintained and described in detail in reports to allow other to replicate and extend *MCLP*.

**(4) The extent to which the project plan includes sufficient resources to carry out the evaluation**

It is expected that the successful implementation of the evaluation plan will require a .25 FTE Ph.D. evaluator, a .25 FTE master's level analyst, and a .50 FTE master's level field

researcher. The evaluation design relies heavily on project staff to collect much of the data needed to complete the evaluation. Thus, much of what the evaluation team will be involved in will be the development of evaluation tools and protocols, the training of program staff in the proper administration of instruments, oversight on their implementation, and the analysis of received information. The team will also be involved in the direct observation of instruction.

***E. Strategy and Capacity to Further Develop and Bring to Scale (5 points; 1 pages)***

**(1) The number of students to be reached by the project and the capacity of the partners to reach those students during the course of the grant period.**

The *MCLP* will reach at total of 350 students each year at seven schools. The mechanism that the *MCLP* will use to recruit students and families into the program is the same that has been successfully used in the SPARK program for five years. This includes a Program Director and a Site Coordinator at each school who alert school administration the opportunity. They in turn build consensus for the program within the ranks of classroom teachers. The program reached 400 students during the 2008-2009 school year and has realized program enrollment of 450 students in the 2009-2010 school year.

**(2) The applicant's capacity to develop and bring to scale the program or to work with others to ensure that the program can be further developed and brought to scale, based on the findings of the proposed project.**

The Boys & Girls Clubs launched the SPARK program in 2005 with the goal to transform struggling readers in grades K-2<sup>nd</sup> grade into proficient readers. This small pilot initiative served a total of 45 struggling readers with four staff. Despite its modest size, the results of this pilot were so encouraging that B&GCGM launched a full program at three additional sites the next year. That second year the program served 210 students with five staff and 37 AmeriCorps members. In each year since then, the results of the program have given B&GCGM the confidence to bring the project closer to full scale serving 380 students at six schools in 2007-

2008, 400 students at eight schools in 2008-2009 and 450 students in the current school year.

The ultimate goal of the project is to serve 1,000 participants at 20 locations. B&GCGM take a measured but proven approach to program expansion. All decisions are made based on positive results of the previous program year and weighed against the probability that sustainable funding can be obtained.

**(3) The feasibility of the proposed project to be replicated successfully in a variety of settings and with a variety of student populations.**

Should the evaluation of the program show positive results, the final phase of *MCLP* will include the creation of a curriculum replication and training plan. A number of resources already exist that will become part of this plan including, the curriculum for tutor training, guidance for developing in-school lesson plans and a tool kit of after-school literacy activities compiled by SPARK program staff. Most importantly, Ruth Short, Ph.D. of the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee's School of Education who was instrumental in the development of the SPARK program model continues to work closely with the B&GCGM to train tutors and conduct program evaluation. The *MCLP* partners will enlist Dr. Short to provide formal training to organizations who wish to replicate the program. The *MCLP* partners will also provide ongoing technical assistance to organizations to assure maintenance of fidelity with the program model.

**(4) The applicant's estimate of the cost of the project for reaching the total number of students proposed to be served by the project; including an estimate of the costs to reach 100,000, 250,000, and 500,000 students.**

The annual budget for project related expenses only (minus evaluation and conference travel) is \$655,465 or \$1,873 per student per year. Using this estimate, the cost for the project to reach 100,000 is \$187,300,000; to reach 250,000 is \$468,250,000 and to reach 500,000 is \$936,500,000.

**(5) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project to support further development or replication.**

The B&GCGM is the second largest Boys & Girls Club in the nation and other Club affiliates nationwide look to the B&GCGM for innovative program models providing an excellent opportunity for national dissemination of the program model.

Outlets for dissemination of the *MCLP* include the annual Boys & Girls Clubs of America Midwest Leadership Conference, National Conference and the Annual Meeting of the Boys & Girls Clubs Wisconsin Alliance. Through this network information about the project and its results will be available to Clubs that serve 4 million school aged children at 4,000 locations in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands and on U.S. military bases.

#### ***F. Sustainability***

**(1) The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it has the resources, and support from stakeholders to operate the project beyond the length of the Development grant.**

Key community organizations have come together to assist in the success of SPARK through a large-scale collaboration. This collaboration is another stride to further the currently under-realized vision of the “neighborhood school” where everyone takes responsibility for the academic success of Milwaukee’s youth.

- **Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee:** serves as the centerpiece and catalyst of this partnership providing balanced literacy instruction during the school day, in the Clubs’ after school programs, and through parent engagement.
- **Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS):** The SPARK Program is currently offered in 6 MPS schools and involves kindergarten – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers in the identification of struggling readers.
- **University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee’s School of Education (UWM SOE):** assists in recruiting pre-service teachers and other students to serve as tutors.
- **Serve Wisconsin – AmeriCorps Program:** is committed to funding the SPARK program with over \$250,000 annually to support AmeriCorps members serving as tutors.
- **United Way of Greater Milwaukee:** has supported the program from its inception and

continues to be a key funding source in the future and expansion of the program.

The joint congressional letter in support of *MCLP* along with letters of support from the Mayor of Milwaukee, Governor of Wisconsin and outgoing and incoming MPS Superintendents (Appendix D) provide further proof that the results of the SPARK program have created optimism for further development of the model.

**(2) The potential and planning for the incorporation of project into the ongoing work of the applicant and partners at the end of the Development grant.**

The SPARK Program is a key component to the B&GCGM \$90 million, 10-year strategic plan entitled, “*A Decade of Hope*.” Through the Decade of Hope initiative the Clubs plan to dramatically increase the reach of Boys & Girls Club programming in response to the continuing deterioration of conditions for youth and families in Milwaukee’s central city. Community literacy is already a large part of the Clubs program offerings. SPARK is offered at eight sites and the *MCLP* increases that to 10. At the end of the Decade of Hope, the Clubs will serve 20 partnership sites and 1,000 struggling readers annually with literacy programs based on the SPARK model. The Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee will be investing over \$10 million in the next ten years to support early literacy throughout Milwaukee’s central city.

***G. Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel***

**(1) The adequacy of the plan to achieve project objectives on time and within budget**

Day-to-day management of the project will be coordinated by the B&GCGM project director. The project director will ensure all hiring and recruiting takes place in a timely manner, coordinate all professional development, ensure sites have the level of personnel assigned to support the students, work with the external evaluator to ensure that tracking of students assigned to experimental and control groups is managed. Many project staff including the project director and a majority of the site coordinators are already on staff at B&GCGM and one veteran site coordinator has already been assigned the task of mentoring new coordinators and assisting them in getting new sites running. This

will ensure a smooth transition from receipt of award documentation to implementation.

To ensure implementation fidelity and quality of the data MPS will hire a coordinator. The coordinator will conduct regular observations at the sites and also ensure systems are in place to collect data in an efficient manner and that data is recorded in a timely manner into the A+ system, an electronic data management system. The coordinator will also provide professional development, facilitate training on the MPS Comprehensive Literacy Plan to ensure program alignment and work with the project director in facilitating collaboration among the teachers, family partners, site coordinators and tutors.

*MCLP* will also be supported by the Boys & Girls Clubs Government Affairs and Finance departments. The Finance department will be responsible for all financial accounting and reporting requirements associated with the i3 grant. The B&GCGM senior grant accountant holds a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting from Lakeland College and has managed dozens of federal grant budgets in her 12 year tenure. The Director of Grants Administration in the B&GCGM Department of Government Affairs will be responsible for administrative management of the i3 award. He has ten years experience managing federal grants.

The following table provides the management plan for reaching project outcomes.

<b>Goal:</b> Demonstrate an impact on improving student growth in reading for high-need students by expanding the implementation of and investment in community literacy			
<b>Objective 1:</b> Significantly improve reading performance of participants through literacy work in three spheres			
Activities	Timeline	Responsibility	Milestones
Randomly assign 100 per site to treatment/control group	Oct–Nov 2010 year one; Sept-Oct year 2, 3, 4 and 5	Coordinator; Evaluator; Classroom teachers	Universal Screener administered and analyzed;

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Recruit tutors at the 7 school sites	Oct–Nov 2010; July-Aug years 2, 3, 4, 5	Project Director; UW-Milwaukee	Tutors assigned
Tutors provided all necessary training	25 hours each year	UW – Milwaukee; Project Director	Calendar of training; Registration completed
Literacy lab prepared at the school with print rich environment	Oct–November Year 1; Sept Years 2, 3, 4, 5	Project Director; Coordinator and Site Coordinators; Tutors	Tutoring space at the school identified
One-on-one tutoring takes place during school in addition to the regular reading block	3 times per week for 30 minutes for 30 weeks during the school year	Project Director; Coordinator; Site Coordinators; Tutors	Students identified; Parent permission/commitment received; schedule set; Literacy lab prepared
Running record results used to plan tutoring	Every 2 weeks during the school year	Site Coordinators Tutors; Teacher's input	Running records administered and analyzed
Professional development for tutors	Ongoing	UW-Milwaukee Site Coordinators	Site coordinators provide coaching/modeling
Create list of books and develop creative book extension projects	Oct–Nov 2010 June - July 2011 Updates years 3, 4, 5	Project Director; Coordinator; MPS Literacy Specialist	Alignment with school/ community/family sphere; interest survey administered
Tutors trained for community sphere	Sept annually	Project Director; Site Coordinators	Tutors assigned; training schedules created
K – 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade students participate in <i>MCLP</i> community sphere	3 times weekly for 60 minutes during after school CLC	Site coordinators; Tutors; Family Literacy Partners (FLP)	Students identified; Parent permission/commitment signed; Students registered;



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Community sphere projects shared	3 times per year with school & family sphere	Site coordinators; Tutors	Students participate in community sphere
Create list of books and book extension activities for parents to use at home	Oct– Nov 2010 Jun -July 2011 Updates years 3, 4, 5	Project Director; MPS Coordinator; MPS Literacy Specialist	Alignment of books with school/community/family sphere; Book list created;
Team building session on roles and responsibilities	Oct–Nov 2010	All project staff	Session scheduled; roles defined
Training for Family Literacy Partners (FLP) on home visitation basics	1 day training Oct 2010; Each year for FLPs	UW Extension/ Parents Plus	Session scheduled; agenda set; participants registered
School-based family events	Monthly Oct –June each year	FLP; Site Coordinators; Tutors; Parents	Event schedule planned; Event agendas set
Home visits to help parents support child's literacy achievement	At minimum two per year – more as requested/needed	Family Literacy Partner (FLP)	Students selected for tutoring; parent agreement signed; Schedule set
Regular parent contact	Two per month	FLP; Teachers	Plan for parent contacts
Parents are provided resources to support their child at home	Monthly Nov–June year one and then Oct–June years 2 - 5	Family Literacy Partner	Books and resources obtained and organized by age group

**(2) The qualifications of the project director and key project personnel.**

Patricia Marcus is the current SPARK Program Director and will be responsible for overall management of the *MCLP* (Appendix C). This includes planning and implementation, program delivery and staff management for the school and community spheres. Prior to serving as SPARK

Program Director, Ms. Marcus served as the Family Literacy Specialist for WVPT- Virginia's Public Television in Harrisonburg, VA and as a consultant to various literacy projects. She has experience in program design and delivery and has presented at local, state and national conferences. Ms. Marcus holds a B.A. from Barnard College at Columbia University.

Deb Lindsey, Director of Research and Assessment for Milwaukee Public Schools (Appendix C), will supervise the MPS project coordinator (Appendix C) in ensuring program fidelity and data quality. Ms. Lindsey has served the district for over ten years in this capacity. She is responsible for administration of all district-wide large-scale assessments, including the state's test (WKCE-CRT), quarterly benchmark assessments; completion of various local, state, and federally-required school performance reports; direction and oversight for the district's data warehouse; development and delivery of professional development on the use of data; oversight for school improvement planning; and coordination of all research conducted in the district.

Dr. Robert Meyer is the Director of the Value-Added Research Center (VARC) and will lead the project evaluation. Meyer is known for his research on value-added modeling and evaluation methods. Over the last decade and a half, Meyer has worked closely with districts and states to develop and apply innovative statistical methods. He has conducted major statistical evaluations of programs and policies such as SAGE (the Wisconsin class-size initiative), systemic reform in Texas, integrated versus traditional mathematics, and professional development and other math and science reforms in Cleveland and Riverside, California. Meyer has also worked with numerous districts to develop and implement value-added indicator and accountability systems, including the school report card implemented in the Milwaukee Public Schools beginning in 2002.

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